

INFORMATION FOR NEW YORK STATE PHARMACISTS

Plan B[®] use by women who are victims of sexual and/or domestic violence

It is critically important that all women in New York have ready access to emergency contraception (EC). This is especially true for women who have suffered sexual and/or domestic violence. Each year an estimated 25,000 U.S. women become pregnant as a result of a sexual assault. Emergency contraception has the potential to prevent approximately 22,000 of these pregnancies.

Plan B[®] is the only dedicated emergency contraception product on the market in the U.S. It is safe

and effective. The FDA approval of Plan B[®] as a behind-the-counter product for women 18 years and older, means that the pharmacy may be a woman's first stop before seeking care from other medical or victim assistance services. It is important, therefore, to know how best to help women who are victims of sexual and/or domestic violence. Pharmacists perform a crucial community service by stocking Plan B[®] and helping women 17 and younger obtain prescriptions in a timely fashion.

WHAT IS PLAN B[®]?

- Plan B[®] is an emergency contraception (EC) product that is a safe and reliable way to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or birth control failure.
- Plan B[®] contains the hormone levonorgestrel, the same hormone found in commonly prescribed birth control pills. The difference is that Plan B[®] contains a larger dose of levonorgestrel than the amount found in a single birth control pill. Plan B[®] packages contain a single 2-dose course of treatment.
- To obtain optimal efficacy, the first tablet should be taken as soon as possible within 72 hours (3 days) of sexual intercourse. The second tablet must be taken 12 hours later.
- Plan B[®] WILL NOT cause an abortion; it is NOT the "abortion pill" mifepristone, or RU-486. Plan B[®] will not work if a woman is already pregnant from a previous sexual encounter. If the woman is already pregnant when she takes EC, the developing fetus will not be harmed.
- Plan B[®] DOES NOT prevent HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

How likely is it that some women who request EC in my pharmacy are victims of sexual assault or domestic violence?

There is a real possibility that you will provide pharmacy services to someone who has suffered sexual or domestic violence. According to a government study, nearly 25 percent of American women report being raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner, or date at some time in their lifetime. Media attention to Plan B[®] and awareness campaigns have increased the number of women who know that Plan B[®] is available in pharmacies and many pharmacists are seeing a higher demand for the product.

Domestic & Sexual Violence by Intimate Partners

- Women are more likely to be raped by a male partner than by any other assailant.
- Marital rape accounts for 25% of all sexual assaults.
- Between 1/3 and 1/2 of battered women are raped by their intimate partner at least once during their relationship.

What are the special EC-related needs of women who are in relationships where there is sexual and/or domestic violence?

Controlling reproductive choice is a common tactic in domestic violence. The following are examples of situations the pharmacist may encounter.

- The batterer is trying to force an unwanted pregnancy as a means of control. The partner is trying to obtain Plan B[®] without his knowledge.
- The batterer is forcing her to use Plan B[®] to prevent a pregnancy she wants but he doesn't. Either partner may be the consumer.
- The woman is attempting to surreptitiously purchase EC while the abusive partner is in another part of the store. She may seem agitated and impatient to conclude the transaction as quickly as possible.
- Both the batterer and victim may be at the counter. Regardless of their demeanor, coercion and threat may be involved.

The woman's relationship with the batterer is ongoing and may involve a broad array of complex issues. Domestic violence is not an isolated event. Rather, it is a pattern of abuse designed to control one's partner. Having children in common, insufficient resources, lack of affordable housing, cultural prohibitions, and threats of further abuse are just a few barriers to escaping abuse. Leaving is not always the best or safest option.

When it comes to domestic violence, never assume you are seeing the whole picture.

When a woman living with domestic violence asks a pharmacist for Plan B®, she may be seizing the only opportunity she has to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. Conversely, she may be coerced into obtaining Plan B® under the watchful eye of her abusive partner.

How can a pharmacist help if domestic or sexual violence is suspected?

Directly engaging a woman about suspicions of abuse could jeopardize not only her ability to safely obtain Plan B®, but her physical safety and the safety of her children. Always be mindful of the possibility that she is being monitored.

The most important thing is “do no harm.” Never underestimate the value of being treated with respect and kindness, and without judgment. Establishing trust could open the door for future engagement regarding the abuse. A victim of domestic or sexual violence also may benefit from information on posters displayed in the pharmacy.

Bag stuffers containing contact information for a variety of community services can be included with all purchases of Plan B® and related products. That way if an abusive partner asks a woman why she has the names of the domestic and sexual violence organizations, she can say that pharmacists distribute the bag stuffer with all “female products.”

How can the pharmacist help if domestic or sexual violence is disclosed?

If the woman discloses domestic violence, ask her if she needs immediate assistance and if it is unsafe for her to leave the building. If so, ask her if she would like you to call the police. If she does not need immediate assistance and does not want the police called, give her the phone number for the NYS Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline (1-800-942-6906 English; 1-800-942-6908 Spanish). To respect her confidentiality, do not maintain records of the disclosure or inform others.

If the woman has been sexually assaulted and specifically requests your help, contact the statewide, 24-hour Domestic and Sexual Violence hotline to find local service providers or obtain more information. The rape crisis program staff can accompany the woman to a local hospital that has experience serving victims of sexual assault.

Is a pharmacist required to notify law enforcement if a woman purchasing Plan B® indicates a crime has been committed?

No. While sexual and domestic violence are crimes in New York State, pharmacists are not obliged to contact police if the consumer mentions the underlying reason for her purchase. You may inform her of the statewide hotline and the availability of trained advocates 24 hours a day to answer her questions and support her decisions regarding reporting.

In New York State, all hospital emergency departments are required by law to offer EC to victims of sexual assault and provide it to those who want to take the medication.

What more can pharmacists do to help?

- Learn about Plan B®.
- Stock enough Plan B® so you always have a package on hand.
- Display posters and/or shelf talkers to let women know you carry Plan B®.
- If a young woman does not have a prescription or ID, either call her health care provider or refer her to a family planning center (see resource list).
- Have posters, bag stuffers, and/or wallet cards in the pharmacy to inform women of local services including domestic and sexual violence services. You can obtain materials from your local domestic violence and rape crisis programs.

Where can pharmacists find more information about domestic and sexual violence?

See the following resource list for the statewide, domestic and sexual violence hotline and the websites for the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

Emergency Contraception Resources for Pharmacists

Resources	Contact Information
NYS Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline	1-800-942-6906 (English) 1-800-942-6908 (Spanish)
Information, referral, and programs for victims of sexual assault	www.nyscasa.org
Resources and referrals for victims of domestic violence	www.nyscadv.org
Free posters and brochures for consumers (English and Spanish)	Plan B® Information Center: 1-800-330-1271
EC providers in the US and Canada	www.not-2-late.com or 1-888-NOT-2-LATE
EC providers in New York City including STD clinics	Call 311
Family planning clinics in New York	www.plannedparenthood.org or 1-800-230-PLAN Growing Up Healthy Hotline: 1-800-522-5006 or TTY 1-800-655-1789
NYS HIV/AIDS Information Services	1-800-541-2437
Policy and Practice Issues	
New York State Board of Pharmacy	518-474-3817, ext. 130
Pharmacists Society of the State of New York	1-800-632-8822
New York State Council of Health-system Pharmacists	1-518-456-8819
On-line EC Training	www.cdnetwork.org www.pharmacyaccess.learnsomething.com
Fact Sheets for New York State Pharmacists and Pharmacy Staff	www.fpaofnys.org/resources/other/index.asp
Plan B® – Now An Over-The-Counter & Prescription Product	
Plan B® – Helping Teenagers Prevent Unplanned Pregnancy	
Fact Sheet for Consumers	
Plan B® is Now Over-The-Counter! What New York Consumers Need to Know	
Information about Plan B® and other EC products (English, Spanish, French, Arabic)	www.go2planB.com , www.go2ec.com , www.not-2-late.com

Made possible with the generous support of The John Merck Fund and The Compton Foundation.



Family Planning Advocates of New York State

Prepared by the Education Fund of Family Planning Advocates of New York State in partnership with the NYS State Board of Pharmacy, the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York, New York State Council of Health-system Pharmacists, NYS Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the NYS Coalition Against Sexual Assault.